

PARABLE OF THE WICKED HUSBANDMEN

BIBLE TEXT : Matthew 21 :33-46

LESSON 197 Senior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvellous in our eyes" (Psalm 118:22, 23).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Matthew 21:33-46

³³ Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country:

³⁴ And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it.

³⁵ And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.

³⁶ Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise.

³⁷ But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son.

³⁸ But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.

³⁹ And they caught him, and cast *him* out of the vineyard, and slew *him*.

⁴⁰ When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?

⁴¹ They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out *his* vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons.

⁴² Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?

⁴³ Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.

⁴⁴ And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I The Vineyard

1 A householder planted a vineyard, let it out to husbandmen, and went to a far country, Matthew 21:33;

Isaiah 5:1-7

¹ Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill:

² And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.

³ And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard.

⁴ What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?

⁵ And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; *and* break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down:

⁶ And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briars and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.

⁷ For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts *is* the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.

Psalm 80:8

⁸ Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt: thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it.

2 He sent his servants to receive the fruit of the vineyard, Matthew 21:34

3 The husbandmen beat one of the servants, killed another, and stoned another, Matthew 21:35;

Jeremiah 37:15

¹⁵ Wherefore the princes were wroth with Jeremiah, and smote him, and put him in prison in the house of Jonathan the scribe: for they had made that the prison.

Jeremiah 38:6

⁶ Then took they Jeremiah, and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the son of Hammelech, that *was* in the court of the prison: and they let down Jeremiah with cords. And in the dungeon *there was* no water, but mire: so Jeremiah sunk in the mire.

Jeremiah 26:23

²³ And they fetched forth Urijah out of Egypt, and brought him unto Jehoiakim the king; who slew him with the sword, and cast his dead body into the graves of the common people.

4 He sent other servants, and the husbandmen did the same as before, Matthew 21:36;

2 Chronicles 36:15-16

¹⁵ And the LORD God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling place:

¹⁶ But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till *there*

whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.

⁴⁵ And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them.

⁴⁶ But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.

was no remedy.

Nehemiah 9:26

²⁶ Nevertheless they were disobedient, and rebelled against thee, and cast thy law behind their backs, and slew thy prophets which testified against them to turn them to thee, and they wrought great provocations.

5 Last of all, the husbandmen killed the son, hoping to seize the inheritance, Matthew 21:37-39;

Genesis 37:18-20

¹⁸ And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him.

¹⁹ And they said one to another, Behold, this dreamer cometh.

²⁰ Come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him: and we shall see what will become of his dreams.

John 11:53

⁵³ Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put him to death.

Acts 2:23

²³ Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:

6 Punishment will be given the evil husbandmen, Matthew 21:40, 41;

Acts 13:46

⁴⁶ Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.

Acts 18:6

⁶ And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook *his* raiment, and said unto them, Your blood *be* upon your own heads; I *am* clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.

Acts 28:28

²⁸ Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and *that* they will hear it.

II The Rejected Stone

1 The rejected Stone has become the head of the corner, Matthew 21: 42;

Psalms 118:22

²² The stone *which* the builders refused is become the head *stone* of the corner.

Isaiah 28:16

¹⁶ Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner *stone*, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.

Daniel 2:34

³⁴ Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet *that were* of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces.

Acts 4:11

¹¹ This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner.

2 Those who fall on this Stone will be broken, but it will grind to powder those on whom it falls, Matthew 21:44;

1 Peter 2:7-8

⁷ Unto you therefore which believe *he* is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,

⁸ And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, *even to them* which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

NOTES:

This vivid parable was directed to the Jewish nation and was given to show them that the Lord had chosen them to be His people, that they had failed God and rejected His prophets, and that the vineyard would be taken from them and given to others.

A Choice Vine

The Prophet Isaiah gave us a beautiful description of the vineyard which the Lord planted, and the very fruitful hill where it was to be nourished (**Isaiah 5:1-7** ¹ Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: ² And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. ³ And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. ⁴ What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes? ⁵ And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; *and* break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: ⁶ And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briars and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. ⁷ For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts *is* the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry). Canaan, the Promised Land, was given to the Israelites, and was a land that was blessed in every way. The Scriptures tell us that it flowed with milk and honey, and the grapes of Eshcol were extremely large. There were vineyards which the Israelites did not have to plant, olive yards that were bearing their fruit, and cities that they did not have to build.

The stones also were gathered out of the land. We can understand by this that the Lord meant that He was willing to drive out the Canaanites — the idolatrous, God-rejecting inhabitants of the land. This was done, so far as God was concerned, needing only the obedience of the Israelites to make it complete.

God planted the land with the choicest vine, a family of God-fearing people. The head of this family was looking far beyond the cities and wealth of this world to a city which had foundations, whose Builder and Maker was God (**Hebrews 11:10** ¹⁰ For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God). This chosen one was Abraham, that man of faith who believed and obeyed God; and it was the seed of Abraham whom God planted in this vineyard. Abraham was a stalk of the- finest quality! What more could have been done as touching God's vineyard?

A Far Country

The Lord is represented here as a householder going away into a far country. He left husbandmen in charge of the vineyard. He expected them to prune, to water, and to nourish this choice vine that He had planted. At the season for fruit He expected to gather fruit. He looked, and lo! it brought forth nothing but wild grapes. The husbandmen had miserably failed. That noble vine had become a degenerate vine.

The Lord of the vineyard had done His part. He had been patient with them, and had sent unto them many prophets to tell

them how to care for His vineyard. "I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them" (Jeremiah 35:15). He told them that they had mistreated those that were sent to receive the increase. Some had been stoned, some beaten, and some killed. "Others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented" (Hebrews 11:36, 37).

Sending of the Son

Last of all, the lord of the vineyard sent his son to them, saying, "They will reverence my son." But each succeeding year had found the nation more corrupt. There was no soundness in it, nothing but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores. The husbandmen said, "This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance." At the very time that Jesus was telling this parable the chief priests and the Pharisees were conspiring to kill the "Son" and cast Him out of the vineyard.

A Straightforward Question

When Jesus had spoken this parable, He asked a question of the hearers, "When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?" They gave a correct answer. "He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen." We soon find the Jewish nation cut off and the Gentile nations chosen in their place (Romans 11).

Vineyard Given to Others

From the days of Abraham until Christ, the Lord had been patient with Israel. He used different means to preserve them as a people unto Himself. First, He prospered them and blessed them in basket and in store, and made them a mighty nation. They became lifted up and rebellious. Then He brought them low and led them into captivity. And, last of all, He sent His Son — His well beloved Son.

But their hearts were still evil. They rejected Him, crucified Him, and cried out, "His blood be on us, and on our children." Soon after they uttered those words the vineyard was taken from them and given to the Gentiles.

As God deals with nations, so He deals with individuals. Are you like those wicked husbandmen? Are you saying, "I do not want Jesus to reign in my heart?" God's Spirit will not always strive with man. Jesus pleads with everyone; but if finally rejected, when the Lord of the vineyard comes what will He do with you? The Pharisees pronounced their own doom when they said, "He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen." Little did they dream that the Gospel was passing from the Jews to the Gentiles. "Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46).

The Rejected Stone

It has been said that when the stones for the Temple were cut out in the mountains and brought down to the Temple site, the master mason looked them over and rejected one, saying there was no place for it. But when he began to build the magnificent structure he found that this stone which he had rejected was the chief cornerstone. Whether this was true literally or not we do not know, but we do know it is true spiritually. "The stone which the

builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes" (Matthew 21:42).

Jesus is the chief Cornerstone. He is the foundation on which the whole structure of the Gospel stands. God could not build this structure on man. If He had, it would have fallen. So He sent His only begotten Son into this world to suffer and die for the redemption of the whole world.

Ground to Powder

If we fall on this Stone we will be broken. The Spirit of the Lord will break our stubborn, rebellious spirits, and give us a contrite heart. God says, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 36: 26).

There is a vast difference between falling upon the Stone and being broken, and having the Stone fall upon you and your being ground to powder. The Jewish nation would not fall upon that Stone. Soon it fell upon them, and they were ground to powder and scattered among the nations. We have our choice today of falling upon that Stone, or letting it fall upon us.

QUESTIONS

- 1 At what nation was this parable directed?
- 2 Who were the husbandmen? and how did they treat the lord's servants?
- 3 Why did not the husbandmen reverence the Son?
- 4 What effect did the parable have upon the chief priests and Pharisees?
- 5 Who received the vineyard when it was taken from the Jews?
- 6 What is the Stone the builders rejected?
- 7 What will happen to those who fall upon the Stone?
- 8 What will happen to those upon whom the Stone falls?